

THE MELFORD RURAL DISTRICT OF SUFFOLK.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1894.

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit to you my report for the year 1894, prepared in accordance with the instructions of the Local Government Board, and embodying the information required by the West Suffolk County Council in their circular of last year.

I.—VITAL STATISTICS.

The number of deaths registered during the year were 253, showing a death rate per 1000 of 15·2. In addition to this there were the deaths of 13 persons belonging to the district, who died in Sudbury Workhouse and St Leonards Hospital—eleven in the former and two in the latter. These would increase the death rate per 1000 to 15·9.

The number of births registered amounted to 423, corresponding to a birth rate of 25·0 per 1000. The natural increase of population, or excess of births over deaths was 167.

The deaths arising from zymotic diseases were larger in number than has occurred for the past seven years, being 34, or 2·0 per 1000.

The following table epitomises the ages at which the deaths occurred :—

Under 1 year of age	48	...	...	...	...	Between 15 and 25 years	9
Between 1 and 5 years	43	...	...	...	...	Between 25 and 65 years	44
Between 5 and 15 years	16	...	...	...	...	Over 65 years	96

INFANT MORTALITY.—The percentage of the deaths of children under five years of age to the total number of deaths was 35·5. This high death rate was mainly due to the presence of measles and whooping cough in most of the parishes, and causing 12 per cent of these deaths.

The percentage of the deaths of infants under one year of age to the total number of births was 11·3.

OLD AGE MORTALITY.—This was higher than usual as the percentage of deaths to the total amounted to 37·5.

The following table shows the general and zymotic death rate for the past ten years :—

	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894
Deaths from Zymotics	9	49	25	17	13	24	20	4	9	34
„ „ other causes	278	241	266	208	209	230	242	301	236	222
Total	287	290	291	225	222	254	262	305	245	256
Death rate per 1,000	16·5	16·6	16·6	12·9	12·8	14·6	15·5	18·1	14·5	15·2

During the past year the following diseases contributed to the general mortality. Zymotic diseases 34. Phthisis 14. Other lung diseases 47. Influenza 4. Heart diseases 13. Injuries and accidents 6. Cancer 12.

II.—ZYMOTIC DISEASES.

The Infectious Diseases Notification Act, 1889, has been compulsory in the district since February 1890. The diseases to which the Act applies, and the number notified during the year were as follows :—

Small pox 0. Cholera 0. Diphtheria 6. Membranous Croup 4. Scarlet fever 41. Typhoid fever 2. Puerperal fever 0. Erysipelas 25. Total 78.

DIPHTHERIA.—At the close of 1893 six cases occurred in the parish of Gt. Waldingfield, affecting the children of two families who associated at school, all these cases recovered. These two families were isolated and precautions taken to prevent the disease spreading. Nevertheless two fresh cases occurred in January in a farm house close by, and on enquiry I found that the father of one of the families went to milk cows at this farm house, and was probably the cause of the infection spreading, through the milk. One of these cases died. No other cases were traceable to the milk. Later on several cases of sore throats appeared among the children, and I instructed the school mistress to send home any child who had a sore throat. Two of these children were notified to me as suffering from diphtheria which I found to be of the mildest type. After this no other cases appeared in the parish. In March a case of diphtheria occurred in the parish of Glemsford, a foul privy cesspool was close to the house, this was remedied and no extension of the disease followed. Shortly afterwards three cases of membranous croup occurred in another part of the parish, without any sanitary connection or cause.

In November a case of diptheria was notified in the parish of Somerton at a farm house. Here the drains were most primitive and defective and had to be remedied.

Disinfectants were supplied where necessary, and the use of sulphur advised. The directions being to burn a teaspoonful of sulphur on a shovel and carry it through the sick room and house seven or eight times a day. I found this abated the virulence of the attack, and prevented its spread to other members of the family.

Owing to the marked success which has attended the use of Antitoxine in Diptheria, and that the most virulent types of the disease can be cured by its injection. I have made arrangements always to keep a supply of this remedy, for use in the district.

SCARLET FEVER.—Though 41 cases occurred during the year, this disease was never epidemic. The cases were spread over 14 parishes and at different times and seasons, and were all of a mild type, no fatality taking place. The largest number 14, occurred in the parish of Glemsford in the early part of the year, and affected four families living near each other. The method adopted in dealing with cases of scarlet fever is as follows :—On receipt of the Notification form, a paper of printed rules is sent by post to the head of the family, and carbolic oil and disinfectants are supplied by the medical attendant, who on applying to me receives a supply for distribution. The case is afterwards visited, to see if isolation is enforced, and that no defects exist in respect to the sanitary surroundings. Enquiries are made as to possible sources of infection, or knowledge of any other children with rashes in the neighbourhood. When the medical attendant informs me that the case is free of infection, the Sanitary Inspector proceeds to disinfect the house.

TYPHOID FEVER.—In the month of July two cases occurred both of which ended fatally. One in Glemsford being a lad aged 17, where he resided there was an offensive privy cesspool within five yards of his back door and used by two houses, slops and house refuse were constantly being thrown close to this door and offensive odours were in consequence not uncommon.

The 2nd case was in the parish of Stoke-by-Nayland, a delicate girl aged 13. Here the privy joined on to a bake office attached to the house, and smells from the cesspool often penetrated into the rooms.

No other origin for the presence of this disease could be discovered, except these sanitary defects, which were promptly remedied. The excreta from both cases were always disinfected and then buried in the garden ground. There was no further extension of the disease.

ERYSIPELAS.—Of the 25 cases which occurred during the year, one died, a woman aged 43 from a combination of this disease and peritonitis. Most of the cases were facial and of a mild character.

MEASLES AND WHOOPING COUGH.—These two diseases were epidemic at one and the same time in several parishes in the district during the months of June and July, and were the cause of 30 deaths among infants and children. The parishes which suffered most were Glemsford, Great and Little Cornard. It was necessary to close the schools in these parishes for a few weeks, and during the height of the epidemic, as few or no children were able to attend school. The two diseases also prevailed in the parishes of Lawshall, Shimpling and Staustead, but to a less extent.

III.—OTHER DISEASES.

INFLUENZA.—This disease in a sporadic form was common in the month of February. The catarrhal type prevailed, and in many instances was accompanied with ulcerated throats. There were eleven deaths due to pneumonia, which followed and complicated the attacks of influenza. The parish of Melford had the greatest number of fatal cases.

PULMONARY DISEASES.—The deaths from this cause numbered 61. Of these 14 were from phthisis, this is less than usual being a death rate of 0·8 per 1000, while the average for the last five years was 1·3 per 1000. The deaths were distributed over several parishes.

CANCER.—The mortality from this disease was about the average of several years past, viz., 15, or 0·6 per 1000.

IV.—WATER SUPPLY.

Among the 22 parishes which form the District public wells exist in 13. In the other parishes private wells supply groups of cottages. So that the populous parts of every parish has a good supply of water. Outlying cottages, which exist in most parishes, have to depend upon ponds and ditches, and as these sources of supply are generally fed from cultivated ground, the purity of the water is rarely reliable. The parishes where this condition exists chiefly, are parts of Acton, Alpheton, Assington, Hartest, Hawkedon, Lawshall, Stanstead, and Great and Little Waldingfields.

In the majority of these the outlying houses are much too few and scattered to be benefitted by well sinking, but in Stanstead Lawshall, and Hartest there are parts in which wells could be sunk with great advantage to groups of cottages which require them.

I made 14 analysis of samples of drinking water, and in four of these I found the water to be impure. One of these from a well in Nayland which supplied four cottages, was condemned and the well closed. A new well was sunk, and the water from which on analysis proved to be good. In two other instances the water was rendered pure by having the wells cleaned out.

A well at Bures School had been cleansed and tried to be improved, but I still found sewage contamination in the water. It is now closed. Another well of good water on the premises is available for use.

V.—SEWAGE.

The public sewers in the populous villages of Bures, Cavendish, Long Melford, Glemsford, and Nayland have been maintained in good working order.

A large addition and alteration in the sewage of the upper part of Long Melford was made during the year. The sewage of Back Lane, which was discharged into a field at rear of the Police Station and often caused a nuisance, was diverted together with the main sewer to an exit below the bridge, making an improvement which was long needed. 89 yds. of 12 inch pipes, and 73 yards of 9 inch were laid down in this work.

In Glemsford 15 rods of additional sewer was laid down, in order to remove the sewer outfall from the vicinity of a bake office.

In another part of Long Melford 52 yards of the sewer was repaired and strengthened.

Sewage ditches were cleaned out in Long Melford and Glemsford.

The privy cesspool system is what is almost universally used in the district : and as nearly every cottage has garden or allotment ground, the sewage and refuse become of economical value as a manure, and are as a rule thus naturally disposed of.

VI.—HOUSES AND COTTAGES.

There were ten houses reported as unfit for human habitation. Of these two in Nayland have been put into habitable repair, Two in Bures and two in Gt. Waldingfield were pulled down, one in Little Waldingfield was closed. Three in Hartest are under notice to have them closed. Ten new houses were erected and inspected. Three cases of overcrowding were remedied by reducing the number of inmates

In most of the parishes the condition of some of the labourers cottages is far from satisfactory, being old, with one or two, small ill ventilated bedrooms in the roof, and the ground floor laid in bricks, generally damp and uneven. The unhealthy construction of these cottages tend to sickness and disease, such as rheumatism and lung affections

VII.—FACTORIES AND TRADES.

The mat factories of Glemsford, Melford and Great Cornard, and the horse-hair factories of Glemsford, Lawshall and Melford are well conducted and managed. No complaints or offences have arisen from their trade processes. Brick making is largely carried on in the parishes of Chilton, Melford, Glemsford, Great and Little Cornard. No complaints of smoke nuisance have been made this year. The Flax Mill in Melford, near Liston, is now engaged in the manufacturing of binding string. There is one catgut and sausage skin factory near the railway station, Long Melford, but sufficiently remote from all dwelling houses to prevent it being a nuisance

There are 14 slaughter houses and 41 public bake offices in the district. These have all been visited and inspected during the year, and any sanitary defects found have been remedied.

VIII.—SANITARY INSPECTIONS.

A systematic inspection has been made of every parish during the year, as well as special inspections when matters have occurred requiring attention.

The following is a summary of the report of the Sanitary Inspector, Mr. J. S. Robinson :—

Number of Cottages inspected	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1820
„ „ Nuisances reported	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	71
„ „ Nuisances abated	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	62
„ „ Houses reported unfit for habitation	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
„ „ Houses closed or pulled down	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	19
„ „ New Houses erected and inspected	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
„ „ Houses disinfected	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	15
„ „ Cases of overcrowding reported and abated	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
„ „ Additional privies erected	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11
„ „ New wells and improved water supply	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4

In addition was the superintending of the laying down of 187 yards of new sewers, of 52 yards of sewers repaired, and of 150yds. of new drains.

Improvements have been effected in the sanitary condition of houses in the district, chiefly by preventing offensive accumulations on their premises, keeping ditches clean which receive sewage, also drains and privies, and by preventing pig and cattle nuisances.

The Sanitary requirements of the district are a better class of cottages for labourers, additional water supply in the parts of parishes referred to, and also an Isolating Hospital for infectious diseases.

No special reports were made during the year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

J. SINCLAIR HOLDEN, M D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

To the Melford Rural District Council.

Sudbury, Suffolk, January 31, 1895.